

**Statement Presented to the Governor's Task Force on Human Trafficking  
September 2013**

On behalf of the Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law at Arizona State University, we thank the Task Force for providing an opportunity to submit this statement. As the Task Force has heard from other speakers, the broad scope of problems posed by human trafficking demands an equally broad approach if combined local, state, national, and international efforts are to have any substantial impact. This statement describes efforts already undertaken and planned by the College of Law to play its role in finding solutions to human trafficking.

As the Task Force realizes, both adults and children are too often the victims of sex trafficking. For juveniles, the combination of youth and victimization leaves these young people in a particularly vulnerable state. For adult victims, who almost always are lured into this life as a juvenile, the effects are much the same. Nearly two million children are subjected to prostitution in the commercial sex trade worldwide; most of them remain trapped in this life after they turn 18. The outcome for these victims is devastating; consequences include long-lasting physical and psychological trauma, social banishment, life-threatening disease such as HIV/AIDS, malnutrition, drug addiction, unplanned pregnancy, and even death.

In an effort to address these issues and provide services to victims of this disturbing crime, the ASU | Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law has established the Ruth V. McGregor Project to Stop Sex Trafficking (the Project). The Project serves both juvenile and adult survivors of human trafficking.

As the Project has gained momentum, it has become clear that the greatest and most immediate need to which the Project can respond is the need to provide direct legal services and advocacy for survivors of human trafficking. Recognizing that concomitant support services are also necessary to sustain any opportunities realized through the legal system, the Project has undertaken innovative approaches that involve both working with juvenile courts and securing community resources to assist with juvenile programs and procedures. Substantial benefits result from this combined approach: a strong support structure becomes even more effective when a court makes participating in support services programs a mandatory part of a young woman's recovery plan as identified by the court. For survivors over the age of 18 who have been unable to break free from those abusers who control them, the Project provides many of the same types of assistance as those offered to younger victims, as well as attention to some needs not faced by their younger counter-parts. In particular, these survivors need assistance with employment and benefits counseling, family law services, criminal justice advocacy, civil litigation assistance, immigration petitions, child care services, tax assistance, and housing. Children born to the survivors of sex trafficking often need services as well.

Providing appropriate assistance requires highly intense commitment, many resources, and increased one-on-one work with each victim to identify and provide the support and services each needs. Working closely with other assistance providers in the community, especially those who work to provide safe living environments and economic stability and those

who provide counseling and emotional support, greatly increases the likelihood that victims represented by the Project will achieve healthy reintegration into the community.

In response to the growing need for services by both young victims and older victims, last year the Project expanded its team to include a second part-time attorney. Together, our team of two part-time attorneys and one full-time victim advocate work closely with every victim assisted by the Project. Stephanie Preciado and Iris Garcia, our two Project Attorneys, together with Maria Martinez, our Victim Advocate, assisted 40 victims in the past year, nearly triple the number served in the first year of operation. Their combined efforts ensured assistance in a wide range of problems facing each victim and went well beyond direct representation in a legal setting. Their work as attorneys and advocates includes providing education and increasing community awareness, as well as providing legal advocacy.

The Attorneys and Advocate work to ensure that the community receives the information it needs to help protect children and survivors from a life of forced prostitution. Project staff work directly with organizations such as Streetlight to provide shelter for victims, with the YMCA to provide social and educational resources, with Street Law to help educate the legal community on trafficking issues, and with law enforcement organizations to ensure that our police and prosecutors understand the complex issues child sex trafficking creates. The staff also work to educate the medical, business, and legal communities to recognize the signs of a trafficked victim to ensure that trafficked victims receive the help they need as early as possible.

The Project has reached nearly 1000 community members through community awareness and outreach initiatives. Information about the devastating effects of trafficking on victims, families, and the community has been spread through brochures/pamphlets, by word-of-mouth from staff and clients who have been helped, and by resources in the community who have worked with the program to raise awareness on this important issue.

Advocacy through legal assistance has included obtaining protective orders, addressing family law issues such as custody, filing for benefits such as education, social security or child care, navigating the juvenile justice and immigration systems when necessary, and seeking set-asides from judgments of guilt for crimes committed as part of the trafficking – the equivalent of expunging the victim's criminal record – so the victim is able to obtain meaningful employment and not be left to return to their abusers out of financial necessity. Each attorney provides an effective, efficient point of contact for victims and ensures that victims are not left to face the legal system with a court appointed lawyer who does not understand the dynamics of abuse.

In addition, our specialized Victim Advocate identifies and meets with each victim to create long-term plans that address the unique social issues trafficked victims face, including obtaining health care, housing, a GED, and mental health services.

Due to the stellar work undertaken by the team, the reputation of the Project in the community is growing every day. The Catholic Charities DIGNITY Diversion program has proven particularly valuable as a referral source; dozens of women have come to the Project for legal assistance and support from this program. Nearly three times as many victims have been served this year as last and, due to the work of the Project, services not otherwise available have been provided to young victims. In addition, the survivor population has, for the first time, been able to obtain fingerprint clearance cards, which has allowed them to gain or continue employment that otherwise would have been out of reach.

Finally, based on the 300% increase in referrals, it is clear the community has found the Project necessary and useful. Feedback from the courts, the victims, the police, and the social service agencies has been overwhelmingly positive.

The Ruth V. McGregor Project to Stop Sex Trafficking also trains students to effectively provide legal assistance to the victims of sex-trafficking. The Project has created an externship in which law students can participate and learn how to serve the victims of sex trafficking. All students work under the direct supervision of the staff attorneys or Project Director.

The impact of sex trafficking is far reaching and leaves long-term traumatic effects on its victims and on society. The Project addresses the legal and social concerns raised by this growing and demoralizing crime. The success and acceptance of the Ruth V. McGregor Project to End Sex Trafficking is a clear indication that the community, locally and beyond, is ready to attack this issue from all fronts – legal, social, and political.

*I am not proud of my past, but I have managed to use a sad, disappointing story to help others by using my past as a stepping stone. I am using my past as my power today, and I am not letting it hold me back.*

*~Anonymous victim client of the Project*

Successfully addressing the multiple problems caused by human trafficking will require the combined and integrated responses of multiple governmental and private organizations. The Project represents the effort of the College of Law to be part of those integrated and essential efforts. We anticipate and look forward to our continued efforts with related and partner organizations working to end human trafficking and assist trafficking survivors.

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